

their daily surfeit of ideas. They grow dependent on the judgment of others the most ignorant serfs of the darkest ages yield their consciences to the control of prophets with a slavish fidelity that would astonish a grand inquisitor.

Why must men read so much? Desires knowledge does not account for the proper use of the information to be got out of a railway bookstall, for instance, is reducible to a small amount surprisingly amenable to the idea of a plain, plain reading. There are satisfactions in the method of reading. It discharges a certain degree of the conscience of responsibility, by a fiction of our self-esteem, we appropriate the sentiments of the writer, we sympathize that he excites in us for good or anger stirred by what we disapprove, co-so many meritorious actions to our credit, get into a world that like better than the real one, and strait about in it clothed in the mantle of the sophist whose "views" we adopted. Meantime our individual judgment is inert, or at the most used in criticism or criticism if in any way he offends our taste.

The more charming his style and the elevated his tone the more injurious will be the thoughtless acceptance of his opinions; naughtiness book does not drag the moral sense awake; the more common the more is valued by the educated, serious half so as the essays, reviews, and sermons "artistic" which abound. After a course of them he believes himself to have been actively engaged in furthering good and checking evil. We satisfied heart and a sense of proprietorship reckons up the inventions and blessings of age, for he is not one of those who assist to advance—who prop the bases of society to complete sympathy? If he happen to lately studied some debate on pauperism some story of a strike—he may be a second depressed, but soon he remembers that "we" are sure, in the nature of things, to come straight sooner or later, he recovers his soul, runs his eye over another subject and then meditates on what he has just read, and he is sure to find himself, the topics that arouse in him the faculty of the satisfaction of his civilised requirements among the leisurely ten thousand take trouble to exercise it? The average man the unhappy possession of an income, underpinned by necessary duty, is much in the condition of the parrot in the Arabian tale, poor bird declared that there had been thunders and lightning all night because gravel had shaken and looking-glasses flashed about the cage. Equally trustworthy would be the verdict of many inconstant readers on the world outside their gilt cage. Coloured notions of facts have passed across their brains and entirely confused their faculties.

Seriously, the mischief done to millennial apprentices, and the like by immoral and books is a trifling misfortune in the comparison of the companion of the man of the increasing crowd of moneyed loungers. There are many symptoms of the disease due to any looker on in society. Every one notices the rareness of good talk, the increasing recklessness, the craving for excitement, the necessity of material luxuries that all in weakening of the will and decay of the mind. "The fish decays first by the head."

[illegible]

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